School of Engineering - Faculty Meeting

Minutes

September 13th, 2019

Richard Weeks Hall of Engineering, room 102


Dean Thomas N. Farris called the meeting to order at 3:18 pm.

The Agenda for the meeting was approved. The minutes of the Faculty Meeting held on April 5th, 2019 were approved.

- Presentation:
  - Ernie DiSandro (Interim University Controller) and A. Chea Smith (Director of F&A Costing and Compliance) gave a presentation on issues related to the university’s facilities and administration (F&A) cost rate agreement. The presentation can be found at https://costanalysis.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/FA%20Presentation%20June 2019_OpenSessions.pdf
  
  - Topics covered included:
    - **Facts & figures on F&A costs.**
    - **What are F&A costs?**
    - **Common myths about F&A.**
    - **How F&A rates are determined.** Nationally, the range of F&A rates spans 20-85% with an average of 53%. The F&A rate for Rutgers University is 55% (FY19).
    - **Recovered F&A costs.** Mr. DiSandro pointed out that in FY18, while the university’s “blended” F&A rate was 57%, the effective recovered rate was 29%. The national average for recovered F&A costs was 34%.
    - **University F&A rates through FY2023**
      - The presentation generated a robust response from SoE faculty, particularly on the topic of F&A recovery. It was emphasized that several funding agencies (such
as NSF) limit the size of awards using “total costs”, thereby placing investigators at institutions with high F&A rates at a competitive disadvantage relative to those incurring lower F&A rates.

- The primary factor responsible for the discrepancy between the federally agreed and recovered F&A rates (57% versus 29%) was identified as the awarding of grants from agencies that do not pay the full F&A rate. Mr. DiSandro’s presentation described this discrepancy as “$88.4m in unrecovered F&A”, a characterization which several faculty viewed as inaccurate. Some faculty felt discouraged from applying for funding from sources which do not reimburse at the full F&A rate, while pointing out that receipt of grants from such sources can nevertheless provide financial and educational benefits to the school and university.

- Ms. Smith discussed the specific instance of unrecovered F&A arising from federal flow-through funds awarded to the state at the higher F&A rate, but then allocated to the university at a lower rate. While faculty were generally supportive of efforts by the administration to address this issue, the suggestion that investigators submit proposals with F&A rates exceeding those allowed in the relevant RFA was not considered feasible.

- Several related topics of concern to the faculty were raised, including the high cost of graduate students (stipend, fringe, and tuition) relative to peer institutions. The Controller was sympathetic to these challenges while acknowledging that they lie beyond his purview.

- Dean’s Report:
  - Dean Farris confirmed that final ABET statements had been received, and congratulated the faculty on completing a successful accreditation process.
  - The microfabrication and characterization facility (https://sites.rutgers.edu/mcf/) is now open in Weeks Hall. Dr. Ngwe Zin is the facility director.
  - The School of Engineering’s 2019 Medal of Excellence Dinner will be held on Thursday, October 10th at The Palace at Somerset Park (https://soe.rutgers.edu/moe2019).
  - The School of Engineering will recognize faculty awards, promotions, and reappointments at a reception on Thursday, September 19th at 4pm, on the Weeks Hall Research Terrace.

- Introduction of New Faculty:
  - Three new faculty members were introduced by their respective department Chairs:
Sumati Sehajpal (ECE), Aziz Ezzat (ISE), Eric Rosenberg (ISE)

- Old Business
  - None

- New Business
  - None

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 4:36pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark C. Pierce
Secretary, Engineering Faculty